

THE INFANTRY SCHOOL
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Security, general:

Action 2nd Battalion, 38th Infantry:
Romagne, October 9-10, 1918,

and

Action Japanese Fifth Division:
Nankow, August 3-24, 1937.

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I. SECURITY: BASIC PRINCIPLES

1. INTRODUCTION.--The basic principles of security, under which the two examples covered in this manuscript will be analyzed, are perhaps best expressed by the following statements:

"A fundamental factor in security is the maintaining of contact with the enemy at all times. During an attack, when battle has been broken off temporarily, it is of vital importance that security groups, pushed well forward, maintain this contact until passed over by the leading attacking elements when the advance is resumed. It is not enough to know that a certain commanding feature was not occupied at some time prior to initiating a battlefield maneuver. This information must be of the latest possible moment before the contemplated maneuver begins." (1)

It is at once apparent that the effectiveness of security depends on contact with the enemy with a view towards obtaining accurate and complete information relative to his dispositions and movements. Embodied in this statement is the implied, but nevertheless extremely important, principle of continuous and uninterrupted contact with the enemy. The most disastrous consequences have in the past been attendant upon ignorance of this ramification of the general principle and, under the same conditions, identical results may be expected in the future.

(1) Mail, p. 5

II. FAULTY SECURITY: WORLD WAR EXAMPLE.

2. OPERATIONS, 2ND BN 38TH INF.--The first historical example which will be analyzed under the basic principles of security is that of the 2nd Battalion of the 38th Infantry at Romagne (Oct. 9-10, 1918) during the World War. (Map No. 1.)

On October 5th the 2nd Battalion, 38th Infantry, 3rd Division, consisting largely of untrained and untried recruits, arrived at Cierges, two and a half miles south of Romagne, and went into bivouac. (Map No. 2.) Here the battalion remained in division reserve for the succeeding four days, being continually harassed by enemy artillery and aircraft. The artillery fire, consisting of tear-gas and high explosive, came down on the position for ten minutes every hour, both day and night, and caused many casualties, chiefly among the men of Company "H". Each man in the battalion promptly started construction on a foxhole and would enter it just prior to the expected snelling. "When the fire ceased the dirt would fly from every hole... Gradually the ..(men)...would desist from digging... Toward the end of the time in this position nothing but the flying dirt could be seen.....Regardless of how well his hole protected him no soldier was satisfied with it immediately following a burst of enemy shelling. " (2)

On October 9th at 4:30 P.M. orders were received by the commander of the 2nd Battalion to immediately move out of bivouac at Cierges, pass through the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 38th Infantry which were then holding the Mamelle Trench, and capture the high ground in the vicinity of Bantheville. (Map No. 3.) The battalion commander, with an hour and a half of

(2) Rich, pp.2, 3, 4, 5.

daylight left and four miles to go, acted with commendable promptness, moving his battalion out in attack order with Companies "E", "F", and "G" abreast, and in that order from right to left. Company "H", having sustained heavy casualties from artillery fire the day before, followed in rear as the battalion reserve. Each company marched in column of platoons with the object of deploying into a column of sections in the assault. (3)

During the approach march from Cierges north to the Mamelle Trench the battalion received considerable enemy artillery fire and were finally forced to deploy the leading two platoons in each company into skirmish lines, and the following two platoons into squad columns. The result was a decline in the rate of march, the battalion just covering the two miles up to the Mamelle Trench when overtaken by darkness. Here orders were received to halt the attack, and to relieve the 1st and 2nd Battalions in the Trench. In expectation of continuing the attack the next morning, patrols were pushed forward as far as the Romagne-Cunel Road, and into the village of Romagne. (4)

At some time during the night of October 9-10 the expected attack orders arrived. (It is not known whether or not any information was received as to enemy locations and friendly supporting fires.) The gist of these orders was that the 2nd Battalion would jump off at 7:30 A.M. the following morning with the same objective--vicinity of Bantheville. Units of the 32nd Division were on the battalion's left, and a battalion of the 30th Infantry on its right. (Map No. 2.) The zone of attack was about

(3) Rich, pp. 5, 6, 7.
(4) Rich, pp. 7, 8, 9.

1000 yards in width and the battalion commander elected to move forward with the same formation as was used during the approach march the day before. This resulted in three companies in line, each company being formed in column of sections, each section "as skirmishers", and with about 100 yards between sections.(5)

3. SECURITY PATROLS.--The night passed quietly with no contact with the enemy to the front and the patrols, which reported Hill 255 and Romagne clear of the enemy, were ordered withdrawn just before daylight. (Map No. 2.) (6)

4. THE ATTACK.--On the morning of October 10th the battalion formed at the Mamelle Trench in columns of sections in line giving, as the battalion commander expressed it: "a rolling barrage of troops" eight lines deep. It must be assumed that the battalion commander directed this formation in the belief that if the enemy held up the leading elements, the following troops would automatically continue forward and break up any such resistance by sheer weight of numbers. What might have been the unit reserves were thus committed to action before the enemy was encountered. The battalion suffered no interference from enemy fire while taking up this initial formation since the Mamelle Trench was on the reverse slope of Hill 255 and the troops were thus defiladed from enemy observation and fire. (Overlay to Map No. 2.) (7)

At 7:30 A.M. the battalion moved forward and, through some error in coordination or supervision by higher headquarters, without artillery support, and

(5) Rich, pp. 9.

(6) Rich, p. 9.

(7) Rich, p. 10.

alone. The scouts, unopposed, passed the crest of the hill forward of the Mamelie Trench, and were followed in all confidence by the "barrage of troops", with one hundred yards between successive waves. (8)

5. COMMENTS ON SECURITY MEASURES.--Now, with reference to the patrols, which had returned just before daylight, and which had reported the keypoints to the front clear of the enemy, a question presents itself.

Q. Was the battalion commander correct in ordering the patrols to withdraw prior to actual daylight?

A. The answer is obvious--the patrols should have been continued until after daybreak or the battalion commander should have outposted Hill 255 and Romagne until his attacking elements had passed through. Current regulations and thought cover this item most completely, viz:

F.S.R. In proximity to the enemy,...a resting
206 force...secures itself...by an outpost.
 In combat, each unit provides for its own
 security by the employment of combat
 patrols.

F.S.R. ...The night is utilized to extend the
471 advance; strong patrols...are sent forward
 to occupy advanced positions....

"Early contact with the enemy...must be made, and once this contact is gained it must never be lost". (9)

"A fundamental factor in security is the maintaining of contact with the enemy at all times...it is of vital importance that security groups...maintain this contact...." (10)

In other words, whether contact with the enemy is effected through the use of combat patrols or outposts, it, as has been mentioned before, must be continuous and

(8) Rich, p. 10.

(9) Sec, p. 2.

(10) Mail, p. 5.

uninterrupted to be effective.

This mistake in withdrawing the patrols so early was a most serious one, since it afforded the enemy an opportunity to place, undetected, his automatic weapons at keypoints in front of the American line. The Germans, in the early morning darkness, capitalized on this error and quietly set up their machine guns on Hill 255 and at, and to the west of, Romagne. (Overlay to Map No. 2.) (11)

6. RESULTANT FAILURE OF THE ATTACK.--As the first wave reached the crest forward of the Mamelie Trench it was pinned to the ground by a murderous oblique fire from the enemy machine guns and by an enemy artillery barrage registered on the forward slope of the hill. Wave followed wave until the entire battalion in a confused, uncontrolled mass, was tied to the crest of the hill by the enemy fire, most of which was received from Hill 255. At 7:50 A.M. the battalion commander ordered a withdrawal to the cover afforded by the Mamelie Trench. (Overlay to Map No. 2.) This was accomplished by the men individually, each crawling back over the crest of the hill. The cost to the battalion of an oversight in one of the basic principles of security was 50% of its strength in twenty minutes. (12)

III. FAULTY SECURITY: A MORE MODERN EXAMPLE.

7. OPERATIONS, JAPANESE 5TH DIVISION.--The second historical example covered in this monograph deals with units of the Japanese 5th Division at Nankow, North China, on August 3-24, 1937.

On July 7, 1937 the so-called "China Incident" broke out and the Japanese immediately reinforced their garrisons in Peking and Tientsin. The 5th Division

(11) Rich, p. 11.

(12) Rich, pp. 10, 11.

consisting of the 11th, 21st, 41st, and 42nd Regiments of Infantry arrived in the disputed area before the end of July, and took part in many small engagements in the vicinity of Peking. (Map No. 3.) (13)

On August 1st the Chinese partially submitted to the Japanese claims, and started evacuating their troops in Peking. These units, consisting of two regiments of the Chinese 182nd Division, retired to the west through the mountainous pass at Nankow, an important terrain feature 26 miles northwest of Peking. (Map No. 4.) At this time there were no Chinese troops in the vicinity of Nankow Pass. This defile dominated the area west of Peking and was the logical gateway to the west, but the Japanese higher command failed to outpost it. (14)

On August 3rd a regiment of the Chinese 89th Division, consisting of about a thousand men, reached the vicinity of Nankow, just east of the pass and entrenched themselves. (15)

8. OMISSIONS IN SECURITY.--This action on the part of the Chinese now makes it immediately apparent that the Japanese, in this action, did not fully observe the following fundamental principles of security, viz:

F.S.R. Information is the basis....of plans
206 of operation.

"A fundamental factor in security is the maintaining of contact with the enemy at all times....it is of vital importance that security groups...maintain this contact..." (16)

F.S.R. In proximity to the enemy....an
206 advancing force....secures itself...
by an outpost.

"Early contact with the enemy....must be made, and once this contact is gained it must never be lost." (17)

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- (13) China, pp. 3, 8.
(14) China, p. 8.
(15) China, p. 8.
(16) Mail, p. 5.
(17) Sec., p. 2.

9. THE ATTACK.--With the Chinese holding Nankow Pass, the Japanese had no alternative. Their contemplated move southwards from Peking could not be menaced by such a threat in their rear. The only recourse then was to capture and, at the very least, hold the pass against any such threat.

By August 10th the attacking Japanese troops had been rounded up and headed towards Nankow. These units consisted of the 11th, 21st, 41st, and 42nd Infantry Regiments, reinforced by 2 batteries of 105 mm guns, by 2 batteries of 75 mm guns, and by 25 light and medium tanks. (Map No. 4.) (Overlay to Map No. 4.) (18)

What the tanks were expected to accomplish in such difficult terrain is unknown, but they actually did nothing. Shortly after the movement got under way, the late summer rains came down with a vengeance. The entire area over which the Japanese were forced to attack was soon a quagmire, with the roads two feet under water. No tanks could move under such circumstances. (19)

The Japanese artillery, while in action for two weeks starting August 11th, was also well-nigh worthless. The few Chinese defenders had arranged themselves in the rocky hollows so that, even if a direct hit was scored, only a single man would be hit. The Japanese infantry were repulsed again and again by the Chinese light and heavy machine gun fire, and though the Japanese captured the walled town of Nankow on August 13th, it was not until the 24th that the Pass fell. This was accomplished by two depleted battalions, which made a flank march through the mountains to the southwest and the Chinese, defending the Pass, retreated in fear of being cut off. The fight at Nankow resulted in a victory for the Japanese, but only at a cost of probably 8,000 men killed and wounded.

(Map No. 4) (Overlay to Map No. 4.) (20)

(18) China, p. 8.

(19) China, p. 8.

(20) China, p. 8.

10. COMMENTS ON SECURITY MEASURES.--In commenting on this action, it must be admitted that it was poor generalship on the part of the Japanese to overlook the importance of Nankow Pass. Information relative to Chinese troop movements was lacking but that only made the outposting of the Pass all the more imperative.

A serious mistake which the Japanese made at Nankow was, of course, their failure to maintain contact with the units of the Chinese 132nd Division retiring through Nankow Pass from Peking. Had this contact been maintained, the Japanese would have followed them through the Pass to the West and thus would have been apprised of the approach of the Chinese Unit which moved in and entrenched Nankow on the 3rd. The result would have been an easy victory for the Japanese with no time, and few lives, lost.

IV. RECAPITULATION OF LESSONS

Factors in Security.

Outposts	Neither the 2nd Battalion 38th Infantry at Romagne nor the Japanese at Nankow secured themselves by outposts.
Patrols	The 2nd Battalion 38th Infantry sent out patrols at Romagne, it is true, but not with the idea of having them occupy advanced positions or actively feel out the enemy.
Information	If the Japanese at Nankow had had more information as to the Chinese plans they would, in all probability, have been the first ones to reach and hold the Pass.
Continuous contact	This factor is perhaps the most important one of all, and may be described as the purpose for which patrols and outposts are needed. Both the American unit at Romagne and the Japanese unit at Nankow voluntarily relinquished contact with their respective enemies--with the disastrous results previously described.